

# Interdisciplinarity Of Paradigms Of Organizational Culture

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## Abstract

The object of the paper is the cognitive analysis of the current of organizational culture in management. There have been considered the paradigms of social sciences and management, among others: Spencer functional paradigm, Drukheim functionalism, as well as the paradigms by G. Burrell and G. Morgan, significantly influencing the development of paradigms of organizational culture. The attention has been drawn to epistemological problems in defining the concept of organizational culture. The variety of the definitions of organizational culture results from the broad interest of researchers in this phenomenon, while simultaneously leading to lack in precision and order in its interpretation. The aim of the paper is an attempt to analyze the most important paradigms of organizational culture, originating from different scientific disciplines, creating the interpretation of the contemporarily understood concept and essence of organizational culture. The studies of literature concerning the analyzed research problem have been adopted as the research method. There has been proven the interdisciplinary nature of paradigms of organizational culture.

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**Keywords:** Paradigms, paradigms of management, functional paradigm, organizational culture

## Introduction

The subject of organizational culture developed in the sixties of the 20th century, bothering researchers from different scientific disciplines. One of the first who tried to analyze the cultural differences was Geert, publishing the book *Culture`s Consequence* (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2007). Since that moment, the problem of culture has aroused great interest of

researchers and it spread into economic and social sciences and humanities. Soon, there was the time of the perception and appreciation of organizational culture as a type of an intangible asset of each organization, determining people's behavior in it (Pabian&Pabian, 2015; Królik, 2011). Its paradigms, most of all, ought to be searched for in social sciences, among others, in Spencer functional paradigm, Drukheim functionalism and the paradigms by G. Burrell and G. Morgan and others. This set of views laid the foundations for many theories and grounds which are commonly accepted and acknowledged by researchers of many scientific fields. The aim of the paper is an attempt to analyze the most significant paradigms of organizational culture originating from different scientific disciplines, developing interpretations of the contemporarily understood concept and essence of organizational culture.

### **The concept and characteristics of the paradigms**

The paradigm is explained as a certain pattern, the model of conduct. T. Kuhn (1998) defines it as a set of concepts and theories which are commonly accepted by the scientific community of professionals of the specific field. Since it constitutes the grounds for science, it is rather not questioned and certainly not at the creative and cognitive stage. On its basis, knowledge and theory are created and subsequent problems are solved. Kuhn's bold views are a bit critical with respect to researchers and scientists. In his opinion, typical scientists are not objective and independent thinkers but instead, they are conservatives who agree with and accept the knowledge they have been taught, using it to solve problems, in accordance with the dictate of the theory learnt by them. It is like discovering something which is already known - "The man who makes an attempt to solve the problem defined by the existing knowledge and technology has no broader horizons. They know what they want to achieve and, in compliance with this, they design their tools and they are driven by their own thoughts (Kuhn, 1998)". It is a set of views shared by scientists, the set of agreements on understanding issues. The paradigm partially refers to the specific detailed element of common views contributing to important discovery (Krzyżanowski, 1999). Therefore, the paradigm is the system of beliefs based on ontological, epistemological and methodological grounds, representing the views on the world and defining its nature.

While referring to Kuhn's (Pietruszka-Ortyl, 2012) views, the following characteristics of the paradigm is introduced:

- the paradigm is the source of efficient creative work of scientists and leads to solving problems, constituting progress;

- the paradigm is what connects the members of the community of scientists and, on the contrary, the community of scientists consists of people who share the specific paradigm;
- everybody who does not want to or cannot adjust to the paradigm in force must operate in isolation or relate to another branch of knowledge;
- communities of scientists may and ought to be isolated without prior referring to paradigms; these may also be discovered later through the examination of the behavior of members of the specific community;
- a new paradigm imposes new, more radical determination of the subject of the research in the specific field and brings about completely new rationality;
- the change in the paradigm amounts to gaining supporters.

The above considerations allow for the conclusion that the development of management sciences, like the development of other scientific disciplines being a part of different fields of knowledge, is inseparably linked to referring to previously established paradigms, however, it takes into account new paradigms and is subjected to their evolution.

Sułkowski (2017), while differentiating paradigms, indicates a few selected approaches, which are commonly respected by the researchers of management in the whole world. The classification is the following:

- subjective division compliant with sub-disciplines of management sciences,
- management schools in the chronological perspective by M. Bielski,
- paradigms of social sciences by G. Burrell and G. Morgan,
- paradigms of management by M.J. Hatch,
- epistemologies of management research by P. Johnson and J. Duberly,
- cognitive framework of understanding the organization by L.G. Bolman and T.E. Deal,
- metaphors of the organization by G. Morgan.

And also the paradigms of sociological sciences, which have become extremely important in the evolution of the theory of organizational culture, i.e.:

- Spencer functionalism,
- Drukheim functionalism.

These and other paradigms, not mentioned above, indicate different orientations in science which constitute the ideological basis for creating concepts being the foundation of the functioning of scientific communities (Jaki, 2014).

One of the most popular of the typologies of the paradigms mentioned above is the one suggested by G. Morgan and G. Burrell (Tab.1). In accordance with it, the criterion of the division is the combination of two dimensions of reality:

- change – continuity,
- subjectivism – objectivism.

**Table 1.** The paradigms in the approach by G. Morgan and G. Burrell

	<b>The world changes</b>	<b>The world is the same</b>
The world is objective in nature, it can be analyzed using abstract theoretical models	Radical structuralism	Functionalism
The world is subjective in nature, only the actor being in the specific culture can understand it	Radical humanism	Interpretative paradigm

Source: Author's own study based on the analysis included in: B. Bombała, 2010, *Fenomenologia zarządzania. Przywództwo* (p. 26). Warszawa: Difin, 2012.

The division of paradigms suggested by Burrell and Morgan is certainly not perfect. It is only an approximate description of the main cognitive theories. It needs to be pointed out that each of the social sciences and humanities developed through many scientific schools of thought, do not necessarily fit in this scheme.

The attempt to interpret the paradigms included in the matrix above presents an interesting image of the reality and conditions in organizations. “The assumptions of the paradigms of radical structuralism and radical humanism indicate the necessity of the concern for the man as the participant of the world of the organization, directing the research towards the diagnosis of social and cultural conditions of the relationship of domination or oppression, which are often the effect of management processes. These conditions are considered as the components of such cultural pathologies as the ideology of managerialism, instrumental approach to the human being or hegemony of economism (Zawadzki, 2013; Zawadzaki, 2012)”.

Further considerations on the classification of the paradigms of management lead to the identification of the following currents of management (Sułkowski, 2013)<sup>13</sup>: *classic* (F.W. Taylor, M. Weber, H. Fayol and Ch. Barnard – presenting the administrative and bureaucratic approach), *modernistic* (e.g. H. Simon, J. March and L. Bertalanffy – the functionalistic and systemic approach), *interpretative and symbolic* (e.g. P. Seleznick, P. Berger, T. Luckman, E. Hoffman – the social perspective in the organization) and *post-modernistic* (m.in. G. Burrell, K. Dale, N. Monin or B. Czarniawska-Jorges – e.g. the textual approach).

<sup>13</sup> This division is the proposal by M.J. Hatch, has become the significant base for the evolution of management sciences.

On the other hand, functional sociological paradigms mentioned above gave rise to the combination of management and organization sciences with social sciences. Functionalism came into being in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but it dates back to the 19th century and the rise of Spencer *organicism*, which was later rejected by Durkheim. Functionalism was aimed at explaining facts, phenomena and social processes by establishing the function they perform in the culture of the specific society.

Kaczmarek (2013) presents Spencer vision of functionalism in the following way: „As a result of (1) *relationship* of the social system with the environment (2) there are born specific *needs*, gradually differentiating on account of this interaction. The necessity to satisfy them enforces (3) undertaking the activity (*functions*) by the members, i.e. directing energy to a type of *action* which is to be the response to the need of people. (4) This action organizes their interactions, leading to the formation of a new social *structure* (“organ”, social institution or, finally, social sub-system). (5) This structure enters relationships with the environment (from now on they will also be other social organs) and, as a result, it is subjected to the similar process: internal differentiation leads to the isolation of functions for maintaining the organ (in here, it enters the relationships of the competition for social resources with other institutions) and preserving own identity. The last type of actions is usually identified with the primary function of the specific organ. (6) The function itself, apart from triggering this process of structuring, like the activity of the structure for the benefit of own duration, implies also other unintended *effects*, some favorable for the whole, some neutral and others harmful”.

Spencer organicism was not supported by Durkheim, who argued with him with respect to numerous views. One of the matters of dispute was Spencer interpretation of the industrial community. According to Durkheim *industrial societies are not the ones where individuals enjoy full freedom and, out of their free power play, there arises spontaneously social harmony* (Szacki, 2002). He believed that the man is not only homo oeconomicus, and the society is not only to provide people with maximum independence and material prosperity. For Durkheim, the society is “the core of moral life”. His philosophy of *homo duplex* made the man a complex creature composed of two poles. However, one pole amounts to sensory feedback, instincts and predispositions associated with purely physical needs of the organism, and the other one amounts to conceptual thinking, moral standards, religion etc., i.e. all we share with other people. Both these human natures are contradictory and to behave morally, the human being must rape their animal nature since, while relying on instincts, they do not know sacrifice or generosity (Szacki, 2002).

Between “old” and “new” functionalism there occurred Radcliffe-Brown (2007), who determines the structure of the organism slightly wider than Spencer, as “a set of relationships between individual units”. In the context of the paradigms of organizational culture, there may be traced treating and defining the organizational society as a set of individuals bound by common beliefs, values and principles of operation. As it will be later found out, the epistemology of organizational culture will not be so unanimous.

### The paradigms of organizational culture

Organizational culture is a rather specific soft part of management, typical of each organization. The concept of organizational culture itself does not have one commonly applied definition. For decades, sociologists, anthropologists, ethnologists and management specialists, researchers and business people have been trying to define and determine what the phenomenon of organizational culture, so strongly influencing the success and failure of the organization, consists in. Certainly, there have been the ones who claimed that defining the culture is a useless activity or even a harmful one (Kuper, 2005). In spite of extensive criticism and underestimating its value in efficient functioning of the organization, there were the ones who claimed that it even ought to be managed, e.g. Likert, Schein, Hofstede or Morgan. Their attempts to define organizational culture and determine its essence in the management process gave rise to the considerations and analyses of this phenomenon. It turned out that epistemological problems in the mode of defining organizational culture have not been solved up to the present.

The most popular definitions of organizational culture, which the theoreticians and practitioners of the organization have been using for more than 40 years, are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The most popular definitions of organizational culture

Author	Definition
E. Schein (1982)	The pattern of shared fundamental assumptions that the specific group has developed solving the problems of adaptation to the environment and internal integration. The pattern can be considered as the one in force. It is instilled into new organization members as the correct way of solving problems <sup>1)</sup> .
G. Hofstede (2000)	“Programming of the minds” of the organization members, thus the set of organizational values, standards and rules, efficiently instilled by the group <sup>2)</sup> .
R. Likert and J. Likert (1976)	The dominant pattern of values, myths, beliefs, assumptions, standards, their personification in the language, symbols, artefacts, as well as technology, objectives and practices of management, feelings, attitudes, actions and interactions <sup>3)</sup> .
G. Morgan (1997)	Organizational culture usually refers to the pattern of development reflected by social systems of knowledge, ideology, values, laws and everyday rituals <sup>4)</sup> .

<sup>1)</sup> Schein, E., 1982, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco, p. 12.

<sup>2)</sup> Hofstede G., 2000, *Kultura i organizacje. Zaprogramowanie umysłu*, PWE, Warszawa, pp. 38-41.

<sup>3)</sup> Likert R., Likert J., 1976, *New Ways of Managing Conflict*, New York, NY:McGraw-Hill.

<sup>4)</sup> Morgan G., 1997, *Images of Organization*, Thousand Oaks, CA Sage.

Source: Author's own study based on: Sulkowski, Łukasz. 2011, *Pomiędzy tożsamością a kulturą organizacyjną* (p. 210). Wrocław: Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej we Wrocławiu No 24, 2011.

To determine what organizational culture is, the most frequently, there are adopted the attempts of:

- reviewing many definitions to indicate that there is no compliance as for the definition of culture;
- indicating the list of elements which are common for all definitions;
- using the popular quote by Clifford Geertz (2005) as the definition of culture: „believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs”. However, this definition is not universal, its use is reasonable only in the framework of the interpretative paradigm.

“The interpretative paradigm indicates relative social constructivism as opposed to radical post-modernistic options. In the constructivist epistemology the man is the creator of the world. Through the process of interpretation they give meaning to their environment and structure it in cognizable beings which are prone to formation. The interpretative approach emphasizes the feedback between discovering and creating the world by the man in the process of cognition. Obviously, the reality is not exclusively the social or language construct, however cultural components harmonize in the creation and perception of the world of the organization. In this understanding, the entity is not only the discoverer but also the artist” (Sulkowski, 2007). However, from the interpretative and symbolic perspective, social processes taking place in the organization impose the perception of the organization as the social construct. At this point, the concept of organizational culture is at the right place.

Combining the paradigms linking the concept of culture with the organization gave rise to their common typologies, reflecting the role of culture in the organizational reality (Smircich, 1983; Smircich, 1983):

- culture, as independent variable, takes into account: national management styles, similarities and differences in the mode of management in different countries, the relationship of efficiency and national culture, globalization of organizational culture,
- culture, as internal variable, takes into account: corporate culture management, relationship of efficiency and organizational culture, changes in and classifications of organizational culture,

- culture as root metaphor: cognitive theory of the organization (the organization as a cognitive project), organizational symbolism, unconscious and sub-conscious processes in the organization.

According to L. Smircich, the classification of culture for the specific group of variables allowed to categorize the research carried out in this field. The first two categories mentioned above originate from the functionalistic paradigm and the third one – from non-functionalistic paradigms, out of which the most characteristic is the interpretative paradigm.

This rather difficult process of the change in organizational culture, associated with deeply rooted standards, values or principles of operation (repeatedly mentioned in the cited definitions) brings about that it is rather considered as the dependent variable, hardly changeable, but created under the influence of activities of people in organizations. While considering culture as the dependent variable, it is possible, for example, to analyze the process of management of organizational culture, the evolution of culture or even its impact on the results of the operation of the organization. The other two approaches i.e. the perception of organizational culture as the independent variable or root metaphor also have supporters among the researchers of this problem.

Changes in organizational culture are unquestionable nowadays. The necessity of changes is determined by the modernization of activities of the organization and it seems to be the most difficult process during the reorganization of activities and, for the leader themselves, the challenge and test of their leadership skills (Kostera, 1996; Woźniak, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

Summing up the considerations on the paradigms of organizational culture, it can be concluded that they are interdisciplinary in nature. The considerations by Burrell and Morgan, or Durkheim gave rise not only to the current of organizational culture but also other scientific fields. The epistemological issues associated with formulating the definition of the concept of organizational culture do not discourage the researchers of this field from increasing knowledge in this area or combining it with other scientific disciplines. It is also advisable to conduct further research into organizational culture and analyze it in transnational conditions.

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